

“Does Job Fear God *for* Naught?”



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: *Job 1, Job 2, 1 Cor. 4:9, Gen. 3:1–8, Phil. 4:11–13, Matt. 4:1–11, Phil. 2:5–8.*

Memory Text: “But he said to her, ‘You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?’ In all this Job did not sin with his lips” (*Job 2:10, NKJV*).

The book of Job opens up to us a whole new dimension of reality. It gives us a glimpse into the great controversy between Christ and Satan. And by doing so, it also provides us a template, a frame, an outline to help us better understand the world that we live in, a world that so often baffles, dazes, even frightens us with what it tosses our way. But the book of Job also shows that this great controversy is not merely someone else’s fight, in that we have nothing to do with it. If only that were the case; unfortunately, it’s not: “ ‘Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time’ ” (*Rev. 12:12, NKJV*). Satan has come down to the earth and to the sea, and we know for ourselves that his wrath is indeed great. Who among us, as flesh, hasn’t felt that wrath?

This week we will continue to look at the first two chapters of Job as we seek to get a greater understanding of how we fit in as the great controversy continues to rage.

* Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 15.

God's Servant, Job

Read Job 1. Focus specifically on Satan's accusations against Job. What is Satan saying? What's implied in his attacks? Who, in the end, is Satan really attacking?

“ ‘Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land’ ” (*Job 1:10, NKJV*). The book of Job opens by referencing not only Job's righteousness and good character but also his material blessings and fruitful household. These were the specific things that helped make Job revered as “the greatest of all the men of the east” (*Job 1:3, NASB*). And these, too, are the specific things that Satan hurls in God's face, saying basically, “Only because You have done this for him does he serve You.”

What, then, is implied in Satan's charge that if God were to take these things away from Job, Job would “ ‘surely curse You to Your face’ ” (*Job 1:11, NKJV*)? The attack, really, is an attack against God Himself. (This is what the whole great controversy is about anyway.) If God were so wonderful, so good, then Job would obey and fear and worship Him out of love and appreciation alone. After all, who wouldn't love a God who had done so much for him? In a sense, Satan was saying that God had all but bribed Job into being faithful to Him. Thus, he claimed, Job served God not out of love for God but out of his own selfish motives.

Think about some of the most nasty and hateful political rulers who have faithful cronies loyal to the death because this ruler was good to them. If, in fact, the Lord really was the kind, loving, and caring God that He is portrayed to be, then even if Job lost all those good things, Job would still serve the Lord. By claiming, however, that Job wouldn't stay faithful, Satan insinuates that even Job doesn't fully trust Him and that Job is loyal only because of what God has given him. That is, in the end (according to Satan) Job's loyalty pretty much depends on whether it's a good business deal for him.

Why do you serve the Lord? Suppose your motives aren't perfect. If you had to wait until your motives were perfect (if they aren't), what might happen to you and your faith?

Skin for Skin: The Battle Continues

Job 2:1–3 begins almost repeating some of Job 1:6–8. The big change is the last part of Job 2:3, where the Lord Himself talks about how faithful Job remained despite the calamities that befell him. Thus, by the time we get to Job 2:3, it looks as if Satan’s accusations have been shown as false. Job stayed faithful to God and didn’t curse Him, as Satan said he would.

Read Job 2. What happens in these texts? Also, what is the significance of the fact that in both Job 1 and 2 these “sons of God” are there to witness the dialogue between God and Satan?

The phrase “skin for skin” is an idiomatic expression that has baffled commentators. The idea, though, is this: let something happen to Job’s own person, and that will cause him to show where his loyalty really is. Ruin Job’s body, his health, and see what happens.

And interestingly enough, what happens does not happen in a vacuum, either. Both instances of the controversy in heaven, as revealed here in the book of Job, take place in the context of some sort of meeting between these heavenly intelligences and God. Satan is making his accusations “publicly”; that is, he is doing it before these other beings. This idea fits in perfectly with what we know about the great controversy. It is something that is unfolding before the whole universe. (*See 1 Cor. 4:9, Dan. 7:10, Rev. 12:7–9.*)

“But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. . . . The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin.”
—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 68, 69.

Blessed Be the Name of the Lord

After Satan's first attack on Job, after the news came to him about all the calamities that befell him, how did Job respond? (See Job 1:20–22.) What is the significance of the fact that, even amid such tragedy, Job “sinned not, nor charged God foolishly”?

Central to God's government, a government based on love, is freedom of choice. God wants us to serve Him because we love Him, not because we are forced to serve Him. “Satan insinuated that Job served God from selfish motives. . . . He attempted to deny that true religion springs from love and an intelligent appreciation of God's character, that true worshipers love religion for its own sake—not for reward; that they serve God because such service is right in itself, and not merely because heaven is full of glory; and that they love God because He is worthy of their affection and confidence, and not merely because He blesses them.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 500.

In the book of Job, Job proved Satan's charges wrong. However, though God knew what would happen, Job still could have acted differently. He could have sinned, he could have “charged God foolishly.” God did not force Job to act as he did. Job's steadfast faithfulness, considering the circumstances, was an amazing testimony before men and angels.

Compare what happened in Job 1 to what happened with Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:1–8. How does the contrast make their sin appear so terrible?

Adam and Eve, sinless beings amid a true paradise, transgressed and fell into sin because of Satan's attack; Job, amid utter pain and tragedy and ruin, stayed faithful to the Lord despite Satan's attacks. In both cases, we have a powerful example of the great issues at stake in regard to free will.

How does Job's reaction here show us how cheap, easy, and false our excuses for sin can often be?

Job's Wife

This is probably as good a time as any to deal with another victim in the story of Job: his wife. She appears only in Job 2:9, 10. After that, she vanishes from the story and from history. We are told nothing more about her. However, considering all that happened, who could imagine the grief that this unfortunate woman went through? Her tragedy, that of her children, and that of the other victims in chapter 1 show the universality of suffering. We are all involved in the great controversy; no one escapes.

Compare Job 2:3 to Job 2:9. What similar phrase is used both by God and Job's wife, and what is the importance of how they both use it?

It's no coincidence that the same phrase about his holding fast his "integrity" appears in both texts. The word translated "integrity" comes from the same word used in Job 1:1 and Job 1:8, often translated "blameless." The root word itself gives the idea of "completeness" and "fullness."

How unfortunate that Job's wife becomes someone who challenges Job on the very thing for which God commends him. In her grief, in her sorrow, she's pushing Job to do precisely what God says he won't do. Though we certainly can't judge her, what a lesson to us all about how careful we have to be in order not to be a stumbling block to others. (See *Luke 17:2*.)

Read Job 2:10. What powerful testimony does Job give here as well?
See also Phil. 4:11–13.

Job reveals the genuineness of his faith. He is going to serve the Lord both in the good times and in the bad. What's fascinating, though, is that Satan now disappears from the story and doesn't appear again. And though the text doesn't mention it, we can imagine Satan's frustration and anger at Job's response. After all, look at how easily he took down Adam and Eve and so many others. The "accuser of our brethren" (*Rev. 12:10*) was going to have to find someone else other than Job to accuse.

How do we learn to be faithful to God, both in the good times and in the bad?

Obedience Unto Death

Job 1:22 reads, “In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong” (*NKJV*). Job 2:10 reads, “In all this Job did not sin with his lips” (*NKJV*). In both cases, despite the attacks, Job stayed faithful to the Lord. Both texts stress the fact that Job did not sin, either with actions or with words.

Of course, the texts don’t say that Job wasn’t a sinner. They would never say that, because the Bible teaches that we are all sinners. “If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us” (*1 John 1:10, NKJV*). Being “blameless and upright,” fearing God and shunning evil (*Job 1:1, NKJV*), does not make a person sinless. Like everyone else, Job was born in sin and needed a Savior.

Nevertheless, despite all that came upon him, he remained faithful to the Lord. In this sense, in his own way Job could be seen as a kind of symbol, a faint example of Jesus (*see lesson 14*), who, amid terrible trials and temptations, didn’t give up, didn’t fall into sin, and thus refuted Satan’s charges against God. Of course, what Christ did was so much bigger, grander, and more consequential than what Job did. Nevertheless, the simple parallel remains.

Read Matthew 4:1–11. How did Job’s experience reflect what happened here?

Though in a terrible environment, His body weakened by lack of food, Jesus in His humanity, in “the likeness of sinful flesh” (*Rom. 8:3*), did not do what the devil wanted Him to do, just as Job didn’t either. And also just as Satan disappeared from the scene after Job stayed faithful, after Jesus resisted Satan’s last effort against Him, Scripture said that “the devil left Him” (*Matt. 4:11, NKJV; see also James 4:7*).

Yet, what Jesus faced in the wilderness was only the start. His real test would come at the cross, and here, too, despite everything thrown at Him (even worse than what Job faced), Jesus stayed faithful, even unto death.

Read Philippians 2:5–8. What hope does Christ’s “obedience unto death” offer us, and what does it tell us about how we should live in response to His obedience?

Further Thought: Students of the book of Job who delve into the Hebrew come across an interesting phenomenon. Job’s wife’s words to him are translated, “ ‘Curse God and die’ ” (*Job 2:9, NKJV*). Job 1:5 is translated: “ ‘It may be that my sons have sinned and *curse* God in their hearts’ ” (*NKJV*). And Job 1:11 is translated: “ ‘But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely *curse* You to Your face!’ ” (*NKJV*). In each case, however, the word translated “curse” comes from a word that means “bless.” The word, from the root *brk*, is used all through the Bible for “bless.” It’s the same root used in Genesis 1:22, when God “blessed” the creatures He had made. The same root is used in Psalm 66:8, “Oh, bless our God, you peoples!” (*NKJV*).

Why, then, is the same verb, which means “bless,” translated as “curse” in these few texts? First of all, if the idea of “blessed” were meant in those texts in Job, the texts would be nonsensical. In Job 1:5, why would Job want to offer sacrifices to God in case his sons had “blessed” God in their hearts? The context demands a different meaning. The same with Job 1:11 and 2:5. Why would Satan think that if calamity befell Job, he would bless God? The context demands that the meaning be “curse” instead. Also, why would Job rebuke his wife for telling him to bless God (*Job 2:9, 10*)? Given the context, the text makes sense only if the idea of “curse” is meant.

Why, then, did not the author use one of the common words for “curse”? Scholars believe that it’s a euphemism, because the idea of writing down the concept of cursing God was offensive to the author’s religious sensibilities (we can see the same thing in 1 Kings 21:10, 13, where the word translated “blaspheme” is from *brk*, “bless”). So, Moses used the word “bless” instead of the actual word for “curse,” even though it’s obvious that the idea of curse was intended.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 In times of crisis, why is it so natural for people to question the reality of God or to question what God is like? Amid the harsh reality of what it means to live in a fallen world, a world in which the great controversy is real, why must we keep the reality of the Cross always before us?
- 2 Though we know the background to what was going on in the story of Job, as far as we can tell, Job didn’t know it. All he knew were the calamities that befell him. He didn’t know the bigger picture. What should this tell us about how, amid trials, we need to remember that there’s a bigger picture that we often don’t see or understand, and how can we learn to draw comfort from this realization?

Filling the Emptiness: Part 1

As the youngest child in a Romanian family and the only daughter, Elena was showered with love. Yet she felt an emptiness deep inside, but she didn't know what it was. Her friends invited her to join them at the disco, where she could fill her emptiness with music and dancing, but her parents forbade her to go.

One of Elena's friends invited her to visit the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Elena had heard that Adventists were good and honest people. But her grandmother warned her that faithful Orthodox members don't go inside of Protestant churches. So Elena didn't go.

Then someone invited Elena to attend a Week of Prayer series. *These meetings aren't regular worship services*, she reasoned, *so there can be no harm in going*. Her father gave her permission to go, so she went, partly out of curiosity about what other churches teach. She attended every meeting and learned that Jesus wants to be her personal Friend, that He loves her, died for her, and is coming again. For the first time in her life, Elena felt happiness. She wanted to hear more and decided to attend the church on Saturday.

When Elena's father realized that she wanted to attend worship services on Sabbath, he was angry. But Elena had tasted the love of Christ and knew that she must learn more. However, when she tried to leave home to go to the church, her father stopped her. "This family has only one religion," he said. "No one in this house will bring in any other religion."

But as Elena read her Bible and learned other truths she hadn't known, she decided that Saturday is God's Sabbath. She wanted to attend church, but she knew her parents wouldn't allow her to go. So she told them that she was going to visit her grandmother. On her way to church she stopped in at her grandmother's for a few minutes but then went on to church. Her grandmother knew what Elena was doing and warned her that it would bring sadness to the family.

A widow lived next door to Elena's family. She had heard of Elena's desire to attend church. She invited Elena to come to her house on Friday afternoons so she could slip off to church for the evening vespers program. Elena was careful to leave church early, so she wouldn't be seen walking with Adventists.

To be continued in next week's Inside Story.